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Disarmament Commission

286th meeting

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New York

Chairman: Mr. De Klerk ..... (Netherlands)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Obisakin (Nigeria): Mr. Chairman, joining other preceding voices, the Nigerian delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election. We believe that your diplomatic skills and experience in this field will guide us to a fruitful deliberation. We would like to equally congratulate all the members of the elected bureau. My delegation hereby pledges its unflinching support to you.

While we agree with the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement, as read out yesterday by Indonesia at the 284th meeting, and of the African Group, as pronounced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the 285th meeting, Nigeria wishes to reiterate its views on the issues on the agenda, as follows.

On the first agenda item — on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons — Nigeria laments that little progress has been achieved in those fields in recent years. We wish to reiterate our delegation's position favouring total and verifiable nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through multilateral diplomatic negotiations. To that end, we enjoin all Member States to demonstrate full commitment to the complete implementation of all the relevant instruments negotiated, in order to achieve their universalization.

On the subject of nuclear-weapon-free zones, we observe increasing efforts aimed at signing such treaties at the regional and subregional levels. However, we call upon Member States to show more political goodwill in order to fully operationalize those agreements.

On the issue of conventional weapons, we hereby reiterate our concern over the heavy casualties inflicted on our people by so-called small arms and light weapons and the serious threat that they pose to peace, security and development all over the world. Those arms must be curtailed and controlled urgently. While we feel somewhat encouraged by the ongoing meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Small Arms and Light Weapons, we observe that Member States still need to demonstrate further commitment to a universal legal instrument relating to small arms and light weapons.

With respect to the second item of the agenda — practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons — Nigeria agrees that the ultimate objectives of confidence-building measures are, inter alia, to strengthen international peace and security, to ameliorate relations among States and promote the socio-economic and cultural well-being of peoples of the world, and to prevent wars.

We believe that mutual confidence represents the cornerstone on which the foundation of the edifice of world peace and prosperity must rely. In view of the multidimensional nature of the issue of confidence-building, our delegation would like to encourage all Member States to show much magnanimity in their understanding of those aspects of world peace and security.

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The overarching importance of the Disarmament Commission cannot be overemphasized, as it is the only all-embracing deliberative forum — aside from the General Assembly — in which Member States can participate in debates and the formulation of guidelines on disarmament. Moreover, this is now the last year of the Commission's three-year cycle. Nigeria therefore wishes to call on all members to endeavour to be broadminded with a view to achieving consensus on all the agenda items being debated.

Nigeria wishes the Chairmen of the two Working Groups resounding success, and once again we call on all Member States to show much broadmindedness in debate, greater flexibility in negotiations and unflinching commitment to the full implementation of agreements reached.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): On behalf of the delegation of Malaysia, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 substantive session.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

We join other delegations in expressing our full confidence in you, Sir, and in the fact that, with your experience and diplomatic skills, you will be able to steward the work of the Commission in reaching a tangible outcome. The work in which we are engaged to advance the disarmament agenda is challenging, a fact that is underscored by the stalemate in various disarmament forums, notably the Conference on Disarmament.

Against that background, the role of the Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body mandated by the General Assembly is invaluable. It allows all Member States to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament. In that regard, my delegation wishes to emphasize that the process in which we are engaged should reflect that all-inclusive approach and that the outcome that we hope to achieve by the end of this process should, at the very least, enjoy the broadest possible support.

My delegation also wishes to emphasize that NAM submitted a position paper on nuclear disarmament for the proceedings in Working Group 1. Our priority is clear: achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament is the priority of the international community. My delegation hopes that this will be the underlying principle framing the work of Working Group 1, which should be captured in its outcome paper.

We would also recall that the General Assembly, at its first special session on disarmament — at which it established this Disarmament Commission — expressed in clear and strong terms that

> "While the final objective of the efforts of all States should continue to be general and complete disarmament under effective international control, the immediate goal is that of the elimination of the danger of a nuclear war and the implementation of measures to halt and reverse the arms race and clear the path towards lasting peace." (*resolution S-10/2, para. 8*)

Towards that end, it pronounced, in dire terms, that "mankind is confronted with a choice; we must halt the arms race and proceed to disarmament or face annihilation" (*ibid., para. 18*).

Some of the delegations here will participate in the upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in Geneva. It is all too well known that the previous NPT Review Conference met with failure. We cannot afford another one. Notwithstanding that, some members of the Disarmament Commission are not party to the NPT. The Commission could be among the disarmament forums that could contribute to laying out the path to reaching a consensus at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. It would indeed be very useful for us, in the course of our meetings in the Commission, to exchange views and consider and make recommendations on various problems on the disarmament agenda, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

While there are arguments that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are two different subjects, Malaysia remains convinced that they are two sides of the same coin. Malaysia's recent ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a good case in point. That action on our part contributes to constraining the development and

qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and to putting an end to the development of advanced new types of those weapons.

While our efforts should continue to move towards both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, we note with concern that more emphasis is given to nuclear non-proliferation. Only through the total elimination of nuclear weapons can we abolish their use or the threat of their use, which is the greatest threat to human existence. If our work at this session mainly highlights non-proliferation efforts, which are generally undertaken outside the multilateral framework, that would only add to the skepticism of the majority of Member States with regard to the motives of the nuclear-weapon States and would shake the confidence of this majority in the NPT regime.

We should be reminded that the NPT is built on three pillars — disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. The Disarmament Commission should likewise maintain a balanced approach in considering those three pillars.

The NPT was built on the premise that States that did not possess nuclear weapons as of 1967 agreed not to obtain them and States that did possess them agreed to divest themselves of those weapons. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference reaffirmed that grand bargain. In 1996 the International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion, underlined that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Momentous decisions such as those should continue to be reflected in the outcome of our session. Otherwise, those important decisions would fall into the realm of forgotten memories, constituting a step backwards in the efforts of the international community to advance international peace and security.

With regard to the other issue, being considered by Working Group 2 — practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons — Malaysia is seriously concerned by the humanitarian dangers posed by conventional weapons. The number of deaths and injuries inflicted by conventional weapons is staggering, qualifying them as de facto weapons of mass destruction. Malaysia supports confidence-building measures at the unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, as they would contribute to strengthening peace and security internationally and regionally.

Malaysia has ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and completed the destruction of its stockpile of anti-personnel landmines on 23 January 2001.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I congratulate you once again on your election and underline my delegation's readiness to work with you and other parties for a successful session.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Arab Group, our warmest congratulations on your election as the Chairman of the Commission for 2008. We are all confident that your chairmanship of this session will be crowned with success. Allow me also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.

The Arab Group, on whose behalf I am speaking, would like to align itself with the statement of Indonesia, made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

There has been increasing international concern over the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in a selective manner, particularly nuclear weapons; over the results of the accumulation of horrifying quantities of those weapons; and over the development of new lethal weapons that are being produced in more than one State, in total disregard for relevant international agreements on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

It seems that certain nuclear-weapon States do not seriously examine their commitments regarding the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. On the contrary, they try to undermine international commitments in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disregard the promises they made to non-nuclear States. The most important proof of that imbalance lies in the attempt by those States to support Israel in an exceptional manner by providing Israel with nuclear material, heavy water, scientists and advanced technology, which allows Israel to manufacture nuclear weapons with which to undermine and threaten the peace and security of the entire Middle East. Therefore, the policies of those

States undermine their credibility and the claim that they work to achieve the universality of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Those policies indeed confirm that the motivations of those States, when they talk of such universality, are merely selective and condoning.

The reluctance by some international parties to implement the results and decisions of previous Review Conferences of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and their attempts to discriminate serve to seriously undermine their credibility. As a member of the Arab Group, I would like in particular to refer to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. We must recall that the package on indefinitely extending the NPT would not have been agreed by consensus without the adoption of that resolution, which called for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. However, the region of the Middle East remains a glaring example of the Treaty's ineffectiveness in achieving security for all parties.

The Middle East is the only region of the world that has not been the subject of real international efforts to rid it of nuclear weapons. That has served to encourage Israel to acquire nuclear military capabilities free from any international controls. In that connection, we warn of the danger of continued international silence with regard to Israel's position. That position has evolved from vagueness about its nuclear capability to a public declaration of the fact that it possesses nuclear weapons, while the entire international community has remained silent. That means tacit support for an exceptional situation that has lasted for too long and has led the people of the region to lose faith in the concept of the NPT. That, in turn, has encouraged a revival of arms race, despite repercussions for international peace and security.

The General Assembly adopted by consensus other resolutions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Other Assembly resolutions confirm the danger posed by Israel's nuclear armaments. On 29 December 2003 Syria introduced a draft resolution in the Security Council aimed at ridding the region of all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Despite all that, to date no serious position has been taken with regard to the implementation of these resolutions. In that connection, the Arab Group calls upon the international community to do the following.

First, Israel, the sole country of the region with nuclear military stockpiles and weapons, should be called upon to adhere to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards. It must also dismantle all its stockpiles, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981).

Secondly, the United Nations and the IAEA should be accepted as the appropriate forums for serious discussions on ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons. That is a necessary precondition to achieving just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The Arab Group supports effective efforts towards the implementation of the 13 practical steps adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which call for the verifiable and irreversible reduction of nuclear weapons under the multilateral international framework. We must acknowledge that it is necessary to agree on a legally binding formula to assure non-nuclear-weapon States of the non-use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them.

The Arab Group reaffirms the inalienable right of all States to acquire and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, in accordance with article IV of the NPT. That is the only way to achieve the universality of the Treaty and to avert the danger posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and it can be achieved by all States acceding to the NPT. Article III must be implemented in full cooperation with the IAEA.

With the exception of Israel, all States in the Middle East have become parties to the NPT. Israel is the only State in the region with nuclear military capabilities. The international community must understand the concerns of the peoples of the region in the face of Israel's dangerous military weapons. Numerous reports of relevant international bodies and Security Council resolutions have referred to Israel's nuclear capabilities. Resolution 487 (1981) was the Council's first on the subject. It explicitly called upon Israel to place its nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards and called upon the IAEA to halt its scientific assistance to Israel. The most recent resolution on the issue was General Assembly resolution 62/18, which once again reaffirmed the need for Israel to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA comprehensive safeguards, so as to achieve the universality of the Treaty.

We must remember that the resolution on the Middle East was part of an agreed comprehensive package whose purpose was to ensure that most non-nuclear-weapon States would agree to indefinitely extend the NPT, provided that their problems and concerns would be addressed at a later stage. The 1995 Conference took it upon itself to work towards strengthening the Treaty and ensuring its universality, as well as to adopt principles and objectives aimed at the implementation of the NPT and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

With regard to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, the Arab Group would like to reaffirm that effective measures are needed to promote international peace and security, while taking into consideration the principles of the right of States to acquire weapons to defend themselves, to State sovereignty and non-intervention in the affairs of States. The individual characteristics of each region and its needs with regard to self-defence and maintaining peace must also be considered. The Arab Group believes that confidence-building measures cannot substitute for disarmament, nor can they be a precondition for it. Confidence-building measures should be balanced and comprehensive throughout the world.

The Arab Group fully supports all unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral efforts to reduce military spending, which would help to strengthen regional and international peace and security.

With regard to transparency and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the Arab Group still believes that that approach is selective and imbalanced, for it does not cover all types of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction.

The most important criterion in making confidence-building measures credible, in the area of conventional weapons, entails fairly resolving armed conflict without the hidden agendas of influential States that are exporters of such weapons. The situation in the Middle East is the best example in that regard. The Israeli occupation of occupied Arab territory is directly supported by some major States that export conventional weapons. One could even say that such States undertake joint projects with the Israeli military industry in order to develop technology and export it to other States. That in itself encourages Israel not to accept the hand of peace extended to it by Arab countries, to continue its occupation of Arab territory and to escalate tension in the region.

In conclusion, the Arab Group calls for a full commitment to and full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It is crucial that we adhere to that important instrument and provide full international support through the successful holding of the third biennial meeting of States, which is scheduled to take place from 14 to 18 July 2008.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of Belarus would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. We wish you and the members of the Bureau much success in your work.

Belarus consistently supports a multilateral approach to resolving disarmament and international security issues. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening and preserving the current system of disarmament forums, including the Disarmament Commission.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Belarus shares NAM's approach to disarmament and international security issues. We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

With regard to the Commission's agenda item on recommendations for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, we would like to note the following.

Belarus reaffirms that nuclear disarmament is a priority, and we emphasize the importance of taking concrete steps in that regard. As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and one that voluntarily renounced its possession of nuclear weapons before acceding to the Treaty, Belarus believes that it is important to preserve the integrity of the Treaty, maintain a balance between the obligations and rights of Member States and confirm the unity of all key elements of the Treaty. Preserving the high level of trust that States parties have in the NPT is possible only if the Treaty itself, the package of agreements that made possible its indefinite extension in 1995 and the decisions of the 2000 Review Conference are implemented.

Belarus is convinced that progressively moving from simple to more complex bilateral and multilateral confidence-building measures will create a stable foundation for the prevention of armed conflict and the strengthening of national and regional security. Confidence-building measures are by definition voluntary and should be the result of openness and cooperation.

For our part, Belarus is carrying out a responsible and consistent policy in the area of conventional arms control. We reaffirm our commitment to the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty as one of the key international agreements on arms control. We call upon all partners under the Treaty to step up their efforts to ratify and bring into force the CFE Adaptation Agreement.

Belarus attaches great importance to the development of bilateral confidence-building measures on the basis of 1999 Vienna Document. As a result of work done between 2001 and 2004, agreements on additional confidence-building measures were reached with neighbouring States.

We support the proposal to universalize and further develop the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures. Since 1992, Belarus has regularly provided data to the Register. We also intend to continue to participate in the standardized instrument.

We consider it important to enhance transparency and to develop confidence-building measures as regards activities in space. The active development of space technology and the increase in the number of States with space exploration programmes make it necessary to continue work to adopt additional legally binding norms aimed at preventing the deployment of weapons in outer space. We support measures for the effective control and prevention of an arms race in outer space.

With regard to conventional arms control, Belarus supports further discussions in the United Nations framework on the issue of controlling the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We believe it is important to comply with commitments under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as to implement to the greatest degree possible the provisions of the international document on marking and tracing. It is important to develop universal mechanisms to assist States in resolving problems related to small arms and light weapons. Belarus advocates drafting and adopting a set of measures to counteract the uncontrolled supply of small arms and light weapons, including man-portable air defence systems, under the aegis of the Programme of Action.

Regional organizations have significant experience in countering the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. Major work is being done in our region in the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). There are currently OSCE projects under way in Belarus to enhance the security of stockpiles of small arms and light weapons. We believe it is important to develop United Nations joint action with the OSCE and other regional organizations with experience in countering the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons.

Belarus supports universalizing the Ottawa Convention to prohibit anti-personnel mines. For our part, we will continue to carry out the complex task of destroying several million anti-personnel mines. We count on international assistance in addressing this issue.

We share the concern of the international community with regard to the problem of the possible use of inhumane weapons. In March 2008, Belarus adopted the amendment to article 1 of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

In conclusion, on behalf of the delegation of Belarus, allow me to express the hope that the 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission will be a success.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia is a strong supporter of multilateral approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation and is committed to playing a constructive and active role in negotiations on those issues; Effective outcomes of multilateral forums are crucial. The issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, are essential topics for discussion. The Disarmament Commission has an important and unique role to play in that regard.

Australia would like to see real progress made across the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda,

including in this body. This Commission has debated some of the most important issues of global security, but meetings are not an end in themselves. Now, during this, the last session of the current cycle, the Disarmament Commission needs to show that it can help to address today's most pressing international security concerns. Australia sees both of the papers recently circulated by the Chairs of Working Groups I and II as constructive contributions to the debate and is committed to engage actively to work towards consensus in both Groups.

The international security environment has changed markedly in recent years. Globalization has increased the need for vigilance about States acquiring or developing weapons of mass destruction. With the rise of transnational terrorism, we confront the possibility of terrorists fulfilling their desire to obtain and use these weapons. Government strategies must be multidimensional, making full use of the range of tools available in responding to that important challenge.

The major treaties and measures of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, such as Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), are central to maintaining shared international standards. But Australia also strongly supports practical measures that reinforce the multilateral treaties, such as export control regimes. As many Member States know, Australia chairs the Australia Group, which seeks to impede the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. And, beginning in November this year, we will take up the role of Chair of the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Australia has also readily embraced the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) as an important new means to strengthen international cooperation on combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and we are pleased that support for the Initiative continues to grow. We encourage those States that have not expressed support for the PSI to look again at the practical ways in which it can contribute to the security of us all.

We take this opportunity to remind members that a strong international nuclear non-proliferation regime is essential to a climate conducive to progress on nuclear disarmament. Australia encourages all adherents to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to respond robustly to the proliferation challenges typified by Iran and North Korea. Australia also urges all States to comply with and fully implement Security Council resolutions in that regard.

Like others, Australia considers that balanced and progressive steps towards nuclear disarmament are vital to the continued political strength and vitality of the NPT. Australia acknowledges the progress in the reduction of nuclear-weapon arsenals, and we encourage all nuclear-weapon States to entrench that progress through irreversible reductions in all types of nuclear weapons. We also urge non-NPT States with nuclear weapons to take similar steps.

Australia also supports the swift entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and immediate negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty as important disarmament priorities. We encourage all States, but particularly nuclear-weapon States and non-NPT States with nuclear weapons, to support those important international instruments.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. It is important that all NPT parties work to build on the qualified success of the 2007 Preparatory Committee at this year's Preparatory Committee session to ensure a successful role for the 2010 Review cycle.

Australia remains committed to addressing the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons through the United Nations Programme of Action. In addition to taking national measures to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we will continue to provide practical assistance to affected States in our region. Cooperation at the international level is essential, however, if we are to stem the flow of illicit weapons and reduce their devastating impact on people's lives.

Despite the enormous efforts of States to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines, they continue to pose a huge humanitarian threat and a barrier to development. In its previous role as President of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, Australia strove to promote the universalization and implementation of the Convention, through its President's Action Plan. In 2008, Australia will continue that work, which makes such a positive and practical difference. In a further demonstration of our commitment to this issue, Australia recently announced its contribution of $10 million to assist in further demining activities in

Afghanistan. That funding will help continuing efforts to clear mines, assist survivors and provide education to mine-affected communities.

Australia strongly supports the humanitarian goal of banning cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, and to that end participates actively in both the negotiations taking place under the Oslo process and the Convention on Conventional Weapons. Australia also provides significant mine action assistance to countries where explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, pose a humanitarian hazard. In response to the United Nations call for assistance, Australia has provided $2.5 million to the United Nations Mine Action Service for mine clearance in Lebanon since 2006. Other support provided during the 2006-2007 financial year to countries affected by cluster munitions includes $7.4 million to Cambodia, $2.9 million to Laos and $3 million to Iraq.

Australia, like other countries, is concerned about the potential threat to international civil aviation posed by the acquisition and use of shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles, or man-portable air defence systems (MANPADs), by terrorist groups. Australia continues to work bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally to help counter the illicit proliferation of MANPADs. This includes efforts to enhance the coordination of regional capacity-building assistance activities to help strengthen MANPADs export controls and stockpile management practices, and helping countries belonging to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation with the commitment they made in 2005 at Busan to undertake MANPADs airport vulnerability assessments.

Australia believes that the irresponsible or illicit transfer of conventional arms and their components is of such grave and pressing concern that it can be adequately addressed only through the establishment of a legally binding treaty. Australia was proud to be one of the co-authors of General Assembly resolution 61/89, on an arms trade treaty. We have taken our place on the Group of Governmental Experts with enthusiasm and purpose. That Group is tasked with examining the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument.

The issues discussed in this forum bear on the security interests of all States. They are too important for all members not to embrace during this, the last session of the current cycle. This opportunity to make practical and pragmatic contributions to address contemporary challenges should not be missed.

Mr. Shcherbak (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For Russia, strengthening the existing multilateral disarmament mechanisms and creating new ones where needed remain priorities. The Russian Federation consistently stands for strengthening the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and international security, genuine disarmament, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and arms control. We actively support the work of the entire multilateral disarmament triad — the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament.

In our view, it is important to promote greater stability of the international legal disarmament base, bridging current legal gaps in the non-proliferation sphere and preventing the emergence of a legal vacuum and new areas of confrontation and in the arms race, including high technology.

Russia is committed to the full elimination of nuclear weapons as a final goal. Achieving it is a gradual and complex process in which all nuclear States should participate and which should provide for the maintenance of strategic stability and the observance of the principle of equal security for all. We proceed from the need to ensure the predictability, transparency, irreversibility and verifiability of the process of the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons.

A pivotal element in the modern international security system is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Very soon, the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference will be held in Geneva. The Russian Federation is interested in the work of this forum being as constructive and effective as possible, as it is called upon to create favourable conditions for the successful holding of the 2010 Review Conference. The important thing is to ensure the further viability of the Treaty, proceeding from the unity of its three fundamental elements — non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and disarmament.

Russian-American relations in the area of the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive arms are of key importance to real disarmament. Unfortunately, there is still no certainty about the future of this process. In December 2009, the treaty on strategic offensive arms expires. Long in advance — as far back

as three years ago — we proposed the idea of developing and concluding a new, full-fledged agreement on further and verifiable reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons. Our goal is to preserve the stability and predictability in strategic relations between Russia and the United States. We cannot but feel concern over the situation when, with the looming prospect of the expiration of the treaty on limitations on strategic offensive arms, there are increasing efforts by the United States to deploy its global anti-ballistic missile system. It is well known that there is an inseparable relationship between strategic offensive and defensive arms, and it is impossible not to take that fact into account in future military planning.

Two days ago, in Sochi, the Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States adopted the Strategic Framework Declaration. The document sums up everything that we have accomplished over the last years in the area of security and non-proliferation, including the Russian-American initiatives on combating nuclear terrorism. It also reflects the differences that remain between us, concerning, above all, military and political matters. The Declaration reaffirms the readiness of Russia and the United States to work on overcoming these differences.

Activities of States in outer space are closely linked to strategic stability issues. Free access to outer space and its exploration and use in the interests of all humankind are of vital importance for the development of science, the economy and maintaining international peace and security. Additional steps are needed to consolidate the efforts of leading nations for these purposes. It is essential to elaborate effective measures to keep outer space free from weapons of any type and to prevent space from becoming a new area of confrontation and a potential theatre for military activity.

The emergence of weapons in space could trigger particularly negative consequences for the international community. One may assume that if such weapons were placed in space the strategic situation would become less predictable, since space weapons have a global reach, high operational readiness and the capability to engage space objects in a covert manner and render them inoperative.

The placement of weapons in outer space could generate suspicion and tensions in relations among States. In contrast to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), which serve as a deterrence factor, weapons in space would be fit for real use. Modern international space law is not sufficient to prevent such a scenario.

On 12 February, at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, on behalf of Russia and China, a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, was officially submitted. We invited all States to take an active part in the draft treaty's consideration. Russia and other member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization have made an important step towards such a treaty. They declared that they would never be the first to place weapons of any type in outer space. We call on other States to follow this example.

Ensuring security in outer space is a common task for all of us, and we should jointly find a solution that would work to strengthen international stability. We have no doubts that the treaty is an effective and realistic way to achieve this goal.

In October 2007, President Putin launched an initiative for rendering global the obligations set out in the treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the elimination of their intermediate- and shorter-range missiles, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The initiative was supported by our American partners. Our common position was reflected in the joint statement on the INF Treaty that was circulated as an official document of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly and at the Conference on Disarmament. The majority of the members of the international community welcomed it. However, there are States that are still not prepared to support the initiatives for various reasons. We take note of their approaches and would like to continue searching together for a mutually acceptable solution to the problem.

On the margins of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, we intend to hold, jointly with our American colleagues, an informal briefing to highlight accomplishments of both parties in eliminating intermediate- and shorter-range missiles, as well as the positive impact of those accomplishments on European and global security. We are also ready to set out our approaches pertaining to the unofficial paper on basic elements of a comprehensive international arrangement

on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, open for broad international accession, which was circulated on 12 February. We would appreciate principled support of our ideas as a promising objective on the way to missile and nuclear disarmament.

The Russian Federation stresses the need to concentrate the main efforts of the international community on combating supplies of illegal small arms and light weapons, strengthening national anti-trafficking legislation and practices and expanding regional cooperation to find specific measures to prevent the uncontrolled proliferation of those weapons. We uphold the leading role of the United Nations in resolving the issues of small arms and light weapons proliferation. We believe that the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons has by no means exhausted its potential. We propose a detailed discussion of the ways and methods available to the international community to combat illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons at the third biennial meeting, from 14 to 18 July in New York.

We approve the way the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has been functioning.

We support keeping the Disarmament Commission a universal forum functioning as an integrator of specific ideas and concepts, for adopting practical recommendations and outlining problems that call for multilateral arrangements. We believe that the Commission's existing status is sufficient to effectively facilitate the conclusion and implementation of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation agreements.

In the intersessional period, we carefully studied the outcomes of the second year of the Commission's current work cycle. We are facing a challenging task — that of attempting to formulate General Assembly recommendations on the main items on the disarmament agenda in a document acceptable to all. We intend to present our specific proposals during the meetings of the working groups. We will provide more details during the dialogue on this topic on this and other issues.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you, Mr. Chairman, and all our colleagues that the Russian delegation is ready to contribute in every way to the search for a consensus.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): The Bangladesh delegation joins others in congratulating you, Sir, and the Bureau, as well as the chairs of the working groups, upon your well-deserved election. We remain confident that you will steer the Commission to a fruitful outcome.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia at the 284th meeting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, we have asked for the floor to underscore some issues.

The challenges before the Disarmament Commission are mainly two — first, addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and second, establishing confidence-building measures in the field of conventional armament. However, for the last few years the Disarmament Commission has not been able to make much progress on either of these two key disarmament issues. We want to emphasize that confidence-building measures should be neither a substitute nor a precondition for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are the two key instruments for achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. However, the lack of political will on the part of some countries has made those two instruments almost non-functional. We reiterate our call for the universalization of the NPT and the CTBT. We maintain that the international community's efforts on non-proliferation should be matched by concrete efforts on nuclear disarmament.

At the national level, in Bangladesh we have tried, successfully, to become a party to almost every disarmament-related treaty, including the NPT and the CTBT. That has been a conscious and unconditional decision. We have also concluded a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including an additional protocol. That amply attests to our unwavering commitment to the goal of disarmament.

The NPT guarantees the inalienable right of all States, in particular non-nuclear-weapon States, to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Those guarantees must apply without discrimination. We underscore the need for the IAEA to continue to pursue the goals of technical

cooperation as regards peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

Bangladesh reiterates that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States is in contravention of negative security assurances. We maintain that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against proliferation and such use or threat of use. Pending their total elimination, we reiterate our call for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Bangladesh strongly believes that regional approaches could be an effective tool for achieving nuclear disarmament. We appreciate the work of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and call for the establishment of more such zones in all the regions of the world.

Bangladesh is deeply concerned about the alarming increase in military expenditures and its negative impact on our development agenda. Steps must be taken to de-escalate the arms race and free up much-needed resources for global socio-economic development.

Bangladesh believes that combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons must be a priority for the international community. We are dismayed at the lack of agreement on the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons. However, we are encouraged by recent developments in the field of cluster munitions. Bangladesh also welcomes the ongoing work of the Group of Governmental Experts established to study the viability, scope and parameters of a draft legally binding arms trade treaty covering the international trade in conventional weapons.

It is a matter of great concern that, during the 2007 session of the Disarmament Commission, the proceedings of Working Group I, on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, resulted in yet another deadlock, thereby moving the Working Group further away from finding common ground, which had been the objective of the whole exercise. It is also disconcerting to note the attempts to put more emphasis on non-proliferation and to pay less attention to nuclear disarmament. However, we are heartened that Working Group II, on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, did better by reducing to a great extent the degree of divergence among various delegations on difficult issues. That led to a fairly acceptable fifth version of the text, which is expected to provide a good basis for further discussion this year. We urge Member States to exercise the utmost flexibility in achieving agreements on the recommendations based on the two agenda items of the current cycle to which I have referred.

Achieving tangible outcomes in this year's session of the Disarmament Commission is critically important, as that will provide impetus for the upcoming session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference in Geneva. We must remember that the current deadlock in the disarmament machinery is not due to a lack of consensus on technical issues; rather it hinges on political matters. We therefore need stronger political will and more innovative thinking to move things forward. Bangladesh stands ready to cooperate fully in that regard.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate country Croatia, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Montenegro, and Ukraine and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

As this is the first time that I take the floor, please allow me to extend to you my congratulations, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the 2008 session of the Disarmament Commission. I likewise wish to congratulate all members of the Bureau. The EU looks forward to working closely under your able guidance to achieve a successful outcome to our proceedings. I will revert in more detail to the work that lies ahead of us in that regard as we address the items in the two relevant Working Groups.

The European Union hopes that this year's deliberations will result in constructive discussions and will do its best to promote consensus. Our goal is to agree on recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Our overall recommendation to the Chairs of both Working Groups is to steadfastly keep the objective of consensus in sight.

The EU stresses the need for general and complete disarmament. Non-proliferation, disarmament

and arms control remain indispensable elements of cooperative security between States. There is broad agreement that the security of the international community continues to be challenged, both globally and regionally, by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and the risk that non-State actors could gain access to those weapons. The existence of potential clandestine military nuclear activities remains of particular concern.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to ensure that all existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements are effectively resourced, implemented and fully complied with. The EU believes that the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), are essential for global peace and security. The NPT provides the essential multilateral norm and the basis for all our endeavours to address the security challenges in the nuclear field. It is based on three mutually reinforcing pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In view of the current proliferation risks, we are convinced that the NPT today is more important than ever. Its authority and integrity must be preserved and strengthened. To that end, the EU will continue to promote all the objectives laid down in the Treaty.

Our conviction, as expressed in the EU's strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, is that the multilateral approach to non-proliferation provides the best means of countering the threat to international peace and security resulting from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We regret that the 2005 NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on a substantive outcome document to address the most pressing challenges to the Treaty. It is most important that all States parties work together to meet the challenges to the NPT and have an open and inclusive discussion in the run-up to the 2010 Review Conference. The EU will continue to work towards universal accession to the NPT, calling on all States not parties to the NPT to undertake a commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament and to become States parties to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

We are committed to continuing to make a constructive contribution to the NPT review process. As a matter of fact, today there is room for some hope, given that the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference was able to initiate the new review process on the basis of an agreed agenda. We hope that the second session of the Preparatory Committee will provide a forum for general and substantial discussion on the current situation and NPT goals, with a view to identifying consensual topics on which progress could be made during the cycle. We trust that the contributions the EU made and other further contributions will play their part in a successful and substantive conclusion to the current review cycle. The EU is engaged in discussions on the basis of its common position adopted prior to the 2005 Review Conference, by which it stands.

In that regard, the EU continues to support the decisions and the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and it will bear in mind the current situation. We also note that the final report, which includes the programme of work adopted by consensus at the 2005 NPT Review Conference, constitutes a reference for the current review process. In that regard, we recognize that serious proliferation events have occurred since the end of the 2000 Review Conference.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is as essential to nuclear disarmament as it is to non-proliferation. The EU believes that a legally binding prohibition of nuclear-weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions, as well as a credible verification regime, are vital. The occurrence of nuclear tests after the opening of the CTBT for signature underlines the need for an early entry into force of the Treaty as soon as possible. The EU warmly welcomes the latest ratifications of the CTBT and urges the few remaining annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay and without conditions. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, we urge all States to abide by a moratorium and to refrain from any actions that are contrary to the obligations and provisions of the CTBT.

The EU attaches great importance to the substantial work of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization (CTBTO). We will continue to actively support the work of the special representative of the States that have ratified the Treaty in his work to promote universal accession. The CTBTO also has additional and complementary benefits through the

potential of the international monitoring system to support the early detection of potential tsunamis. The EU is deeply concerned that the financial stability of the Organization and the collective investment by the international community in the CTBT verification regime are threatened by the failure of some signatory States to meet their commitments. We therefore urge all signatory States to meet their financial obligations in full, on time and without conditions. In addition to fulfilling our financial obligations, the EU has extended its support for the CTBTO in areas such as training, capacity-building and enhancing the performance of the global verification system.

The European Union also attaches clear priority to the negotiation without precondition in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as a means to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation. It constitutes a priority that is ripe for negotiation. We were encouraged by the substantive debates conducted in the Conference on Disarmament on this issue in 2006 and the progress made last year through the appointment of a coordinator on item 2 of the agenda and the constructive deliberations on a fissile material cut-off treaty that took place during the first part of the session.

The EU appeals to all delegations in the Conference on Disarmament to work towards achieving consensus on a possible programme of work that would enable the Conference to start negotiations on a cut-off treaty as soon as possible. Pending the entry into force of a fissile material cut-off treaty, the European Union calls on all States to declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the action of the four nuclear-weapon States that have done this.

The EU supports the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and has welcomed the reduction of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons and their delivery systems since the end of the cold war, as well as the important steps taken by two EU member States. We stress the need for an overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT, in particular by those countries that possess the largest arsenals. In that context, we recognize the application of the principle of irreversibility to guide all measures in the field of nuclear disarmament and arms control, as a contribution to the maintenance and enforcement of international peace, security and stability, taking those conditions into account. We are pursuing efforts to secure transparency as a voluntary confidence-building measure to support further progress in disarmament.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which reduced the United States and Russia's strategic nuclear weapons arsenals to 6,000 accountable warheads, is due to expire in 2009. We note that the United States-Russia Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions, which limits each side to no more than 1,700 to 2,200 deployed strategic nuclear warheads, will expire on 31 December 2012. While welcoming the reductions in deployed nuclear warheads and means of delivery that START and the Moscow Treaty have brought about, the European Union stresses the need for more progress in structurally reducing those nuclear arsenals through appropriate follow-on processes. In that regard, the EU was encouraged by the announcement in July 2007 that the United States and the Russian Federation are discussing the development of a post-START arrangement.

The EU also highlights the importance of the implementation of the presidential nuclear initiatives declared by the Presidents of Russia and the United States of America in 1991 and 1992 on unilateral reduction in their stocks of non-strategic nuclear weapons, and it calls on all States with non-strategic nuclear weapons to include them in their general arms control and disarmament processes, with a view to their reduction and elimination.

We welcome the announcement by the United States confirming the full implementation of their part of the commitments in 2003. The EU stresses the importance, from the point of view of nuclear disarmament, of the programmes for the destruction and elimination of nuclear weapons and the elimination of fissile material as part of the G-8 global partnership.

Since security in Europe is linked to security in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the EU places particular importance on non-proliferation and disarmament issues in that region. In that context, the EU reiterates the urgent necessity for the universalization of the NPT and as early an entry into force as possible of the CTBT.

The EU calls on all States in that region to make the Middle East into an effectively verifiable zone free

of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, in keeping with the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

Iran's nuclear programme poses a major challenge to the non-proliferation regime. Iran has for more than 20 years hidden a series of clandestine nuclear activities and is pursuing enrichment and heavy-water-related activities while simultaneously developing a ballistic missile programme. Iran has cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) only when pressed, and in a piecemeal fashion. While some progress has been made on the outstanding questions, Iran has refused to implement the additional protocol, to suspend its sensitive activities and to take advantage of offers for negotiation.

By adopting sanctions resolution 1803 (2008) on Iran's nuclear programme under Article 41, Chapter VII, of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council for the third time sent Iran a strong message of international resolve. We call upon Iran to fulfil the requirements of the Security Council and the IAEA, including the suspension of its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and work on all heavy-water-related projects.

The EU remains committed to an early negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, and it reaffirms its firm commitment to a dual-track approach. We call upon Iran to open the way for negotiations by complying with Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008). We reaffirm our support for the proposals presented to Iran in June 2006 by the Secretary-General and the High Representative of the European Union, which can be further developed. The EU reiterates its recognition of Iran's right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in conformity with its NPT obligations. A solution to the Iranian nuclear issue would significantly contribute to global non-proliferation efforts and to the achievement of the objective of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, including their means of delivery.

The EU continues to attach great importance to nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned, as elaborated in the guidelines adopted by the Disarmament Commission during its 1999 substantive session. Nuclear-weapon-free zones enhance regional and global peace and security and are a means to promote nuclear disarmament, stability and confidence. We welcome and support the signature and ratification by the nuclear-weapon States of the relevant protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zones following the completion of the necessary consultations. We hope that outstanding issues concerning nuclear-weapon-free zones can be resolved through full consultations in accordance with the Disarmament Commission's guidelines and with the agreement of all parties involved.

The European Union pays particular attention to the need to enhance the detectability of violations, as a means to reinforce compliance with obligations established by the multilateral treaty regime. To that end, particular emphasis is placed on making best use of existing verification mechanisms and, where necessary, establishing additional verification instruments. The EU supports strengthening the role of the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for safeguarding international peace and security.

The EU would like to highlight the IAEA's unique and positive role in verifying States' compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation commitments. The EU believes that the international safeguards system of the IAEA is the irreplaceable basis for verification in the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and for the success of that multilateral system. The EU considers that comprehensive safeguards agreements together with additional protocols have a deterrent effect on nuclear proliferation, form today's verification standard and constitute the current IAEA verification standard. The EU would therefore like to reiterate its call for universal accession to comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols. EU member States are also working towards making the additional protocol a condition for supply for sensitive nuclear exports.

The European Union continues to be committed to strong national and internationally coordinated export controls in order to complement our obligations under the NPT, and to support the strengthening of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The European Union urges the Group and the Zangger Committee to share their experience on export controls with non-members in order to meet the new non-proliferation challenges arising from an increase in global trade in nuclear-related goods.

Among the relevant multilateral instruments, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) plays a crucial role in developing an effective mechanism for the prevention and counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of production and delivery to or from States and non-State actors worldwide. We commend the 1540 Committee for engaging in activities in support of the resolution and urge them to continue to step up focused outreach to those regions where implementation of the resolution is most urgent.

We appreciate the positive attitude of Member States as regards the need for comprehensive national implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and encourage States to continue in their national efforts towards implementation in line with the goal contained in resolution 1673 (2006) to achieve compliance this year through the achievement of the implementation of all provisions of resolution 1540 (2004). The EU is ready to continue to provide assistance, in particular in building legal and administrative infrastructure, sharing our experience of implementation, and training respective national authorities.

We should not be distracted from other important tasks on the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation agenda this year. Those tasks are manifold and include a broad range of issues that also relate to conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons. The EU is strongly committed to eradicating the illicit accumulation and trade in small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition. The EU aims to reduce the unregulated availability of small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition in areas of conflict or potential conflict. To further its objectives, the EU has adopted a specific strategy to combat the illicit accumulation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons and associated ammunition. Other specific instruments include a code of conduct on arms exports, a joint action on combating the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons and a common position requiring member States to introduce national legislation to effectively control brokering activities. We are also determined to contribute to reducing the risk posed by the diversion of small arms and light weapons into the illicit market, in particular through efforts to combat illicit trafficking of such weapons by air, inter alia by increasing cooperation and exchanges of information between States.

The EU was deeply disappointed that the Review Conference on the Programme of Action was unable to agree on an outcome document in 2006. The EU looks forward to a more focused, action-oriented and fruitful third Biennial Meeting of States. We will spare no effort to that end and strongly encourage all Member States to take part in that major event. We commend and fully support the ongoing efforts of the Chair-designate of that meeting towards that end. The EU would like to underline the importance of the national reporting requirement in the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument as a tool to enhance transparency and the identification of implementation challenges.

Global standards on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons are essential in tracking the illicit trade in those weapons. The adoption of the International Instrument on Marking and Tracing was a first important step in the implementation of the Programme of Action in that regard. The EU supports the full implementation and further strengthening in the future of the International Marking and Tracing Instrument, inter alia by making it legally binding. We look forward to the first meeting devoted to its implementation, which will take place next July in the framework of the Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms, with a view to the continued process beyond the third Biennial Meeting.

Brokering controls remain a high priority for the EU, as illicit brokering is recognized as being among the main factors fuelling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons worldwide. We welcome the report of the Group of Governmental Experts established by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/81. We all need to implement the recommendations contained in the report, as well as to continue to consider further steps to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

The fight against the illicit trade in ammunition continues to be another pressing task. Uncontrolled stocks of ammunition contribute to the risks of trafficking and proliferation and to the prolongation and intensification of armed conflicts. Furthermore, insufficiently secured stockpiles in storage depots constitute a threat to security, health and the environment. There is currently a growing awareness of the importance of the ammunition problem. That is reflected in the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. In that regard, the EU welcomes the start of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus

established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/72, which has already held its first and second sessions of work.

The EU continues to strongly encourage progress to strengthen arms transfer controls in general. The EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports has made an important contribution to that goal by setting up conditions for the responsible transfers of arms by EU member States and associated States. The European Union also continues to attach great importance to the efforts of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies in further strengthening arms-transfer controls.

On this occasion, I would like to reiterate the EU's position on the pressing need for an arms trade treaty. Every day and everywhere, people are affected by irresponsible arms transfers. Their negative impact on peace, reconstruction, security, stability, human rights and sustainable development is especially damaging to developing countries, in particular those in Africa. In addition, it diverts scarce resources from vital poverty alleviation and other development work. The EU firmly supports the elaboration of a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. The European Union is convinced that the United Nations is the only appropriate forum for delivering a truly universal instrument.

The EU has noted that there is a strong call from States and civil society for the establishment of a treaty to better regulate the trade in arms. We reiterate our view that the establishment of binding standards consistent with the existing responsibilities of States under relevant international law would be a major contribution to tackling the undesirable and irresponsible proliferation of conventional weapons, which undermines peace, security, development and full respect for human rights. The European Union is committed to playing an active role in that process. We urge other States to actively support the process aimed at an arms trade treaty as well as the work of the Group of Governmental Experts, which held its first session in February in New York.

The use of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) by terrorists and non-State actors as a tool for threatening civil aviation demands further attention and sustained and comprehensive action. MANPADS are lethal, easily concealable and inexpensive. In that respect, the EU firmly supports broader efforts in various multilateral forums, focusing in particular on export controls, including the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Principles for Export Controls of MANPADS and the Group of Eight initiative. The EU supports both initiatives that are in the wider context of the United Nations Programme of Action, as well as initiatives specifically targeting MANPADS-related issues. The EU fully supports intensifying efforts to prevent the illicit transfer of, unauthorized access to and the use of MANPADS, including through the implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The EU welcomes the progress achieved in universalizing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Good progress has been made in destroying stockpiled anti-personnel mines, clearing mined areas and assisting victims, although much remains to be accomplished.

Promoting and achieving universal adherence to the Convention remain priorities. Eleven years ago, more than 50 countries produced and sold anti-personnel mines. Since then, a major effort has been made to ban the production and trafficking of these items. Almost 80 per cent of the world's States have now acceded to the Convention. However, that is not yet enough, as important countries remain outside the Convention. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

The EU regrets that the implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which is the cornerstone of European security, has been suspended by one of its States parties. We call for the reversal of that unilateral suspension, which risks eroding the integrity of the CFE regime and undermines the cooperative approach to security in the OSCE area. The message that the European Union delivered last year in this body stated very clearly the EU's attachment to the regime developed in Europe for conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures, in particular via the OSCE. The CFE Treaty is a central element of that regime. We support the ongoing efforts to overcome the CFE crisis.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) constitutes an integral part of

international humanitarian law, and the EU attaches great importance to it. A clear consensus exists on the need to urgently address the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, as demonstrated by the decision to establish a Group of Governmental Experts to deal with this matter. The European Union has expressed its commitment to negotiate a legally binding instrument that addresses the humanitarian concerns regarding cluster munitions in all their aspects by the end of 2008. Its aim is to conclude a legally binding instrument that prohibits the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, and to include provisions on cooperation and assistance. The EU feels encouraged by the fact that the CCW has actually begun to implement its negotiation mandate and has engaged in real negotiations that reinforce the credibility of the CCW.

Negotiations on cluster munitions are also ongoing, within the framework of the so-called Oslo process. The EU considers that the work on cluster munitions carried out within the framework of the CCW and the Oslo process is complementary and mutually reinforcing and that each forum can benefit from work done in the other, by taking advantage of, inter alia, the military and technical expertise of the CCW.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset to express to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our full cooperation to ensure the success of our work. I also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Elbio Rosselli, and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups, Mr. Jean-Francis Zinsou of Benin and Mr. Carlos Duarte of Brazil, for their efforts during the previous session. In addition, I cannot fail to welcome the presence of Ambassador Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

My delegation associates itself fully with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of Non-Aligned Countries, by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Group of African States and by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

During the past two sessions, the Disarmament Commission was not able to produce substantive results on the two items that it had decided upon at the beginning of the three-year cycle 2006-2008. That failure worsened an atmosphere already affected by the stalemate of the multilateral disarmament effort and heightened legitimate concerns over the emergence of new threats, which have never been so pressing or so worrisome for the international community as a whole.

This year, the Disarmament Commission is called upon to complete the third and last stage of the three-year cycle 2006-2008 and to begin a critical phase in its work. Another failure would once again impair the functioning of the multilateral disarmament mechanism and would be fraught with consequences on the eve of an event as important as the preparation of the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In such a context, the preservation of international peace and security is, more than ever before, a joint challenge that we must address if we are to create together the necessary conditions for the profound changes in attitudes that will enable us to establish the collective security system to which we aspire. That requires dedication to promoting the rule of law and rehabilitation of the multilateral negotiation and cooperation framework.

We also hope to see a renewed effort on the part of all parties present here, so that this important United Nations organ can resume its role and substantive debate can finally be revived in an area that is extremely important for international peace and security. Recourse to the virtues of negotiation and dialogue must be continued in order to achieve disarmament and to promote an era of collective peace and security. This desire is within our reach although it will require political determination by States and a joint approach to the debate on the question of disarmament in all its dimensions.

In this connection, I would remind the Commission that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries expressed the political determination and displayed the necessary flexibility to reach consensus on the items in the agenda at the beginning of this working cycle of the Commission. The working document that NAM presented bears witness to its determination to strive for the strengthening of

international peace and security and constitutes a balanced platform from which to achieve tangible results by the end of our Commission's work.

It is in this constructive spirit of dialogue and agreement that my delegation would like to reiterate its availability to contribute to the success of the Commission's work and to reach consensus on the two items on its agenda. Comments made during the past two sessions on recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons bear witness to the precariousness of the hopes nourished by the climate of détente at the end of the cold war and the important joint decisions taken at the NPT review conferences in 1995 and 2000. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the nuclear disarmament objectives recover their full meaning and relevance. Their implementation must be part of a process firmly based on strict respect for the principles contained in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the priorities it established, with nuclear disarmament foremost among them.

Reaching those objectives depends inevitably on the universality of the NPT, the implementation of the undertakings of the nuclear States during the sixth NPT Review Conference and a definitive break with the order based on the doctrine of military deterrence and supremacy. It must be actively undertaken through the revitalization of the Disarmament Conference, the only multilateral forum for disarmament negotiation that can draw up a work programme allowing for negotiations on the elaboration of legally binding instruments on nuclear disarmament and guarantees of non-use of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, it is immensely important that we remember that the NPT is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime in its horizontal and vertical dimensions. Respect for, and strict and non-selective implementation of, the commitments assumed must go hand in hand with joint international efforts aimed at promoting technological cooperation and scientific exchanges that will enable all States to have access to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

With regard to the second item, we would like to reiterate our readiness to work for a consensus on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. We believe that it will be possible to attain such an objective by the end of the Commission's work, taking into account the concerns of all delegations. It would be useful to underscore, however, that such measures, intended to create conditions for peaceful coexistence and to improve international relations based on solidarity and cooperation, would be greatly strengthened by the reaffirmation of respect for the universal principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Furthermore, any approach to confidence-building must be global in nature in order to reinforce peace and security. It must favour weapons limitations and contribute to disarmament in both conventional and nuclear weapons.

Lastly, to conclude I would like to reiterate the hope that the Disarmament Commission, which has shown proof of its effectiveness in the past, will continue to serve as the framework for productive and fruitful exchanges.

Mr. Sen (India): Please accept, Sir, our congratulations on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission. We will extend all possible support to you and the other members of the Bureau in the discharge of your responsibilities. We would also like to place on record our appreciation for the efforts of the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups. We value the statement made by the Secretary-General in the Commission yesterday. We thank the High Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, for his contribution to our common endeavours.

India broadly associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. It attaches high importance to the Disarmament Commission, which is the deliberative arm of the three disarmament bodies established by consensus at the tenth special session of the General Assembly. As the universal deliberative forum, it provides for in-depth consideration of specific disarmament issues for submission of recommendations for the General Assembly.

We cannot overemphasize the role of this body at a time when the international disarmament agenda is under severe strain. The Disarmament Commission offers a unique opportunity for Member States to bridge differences and achieve common approaches of a universal character.

We feel that this body can play a central role in bringing back coherence and consensus to address the security challenges of our time. Member States should

resist the temptation to transplant in the Commission frameworks and parameters that may be relevant elsewhere. The deliberations of the Commission will yield positive and substantive results if Member States are willing to use this body to draw up universal guidelines and recommendations conveying a forward-looking vision for a more secure world.

With regard to Working Group I, on recommendations for achieving the objective of universal nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, India has made detailed and substantive interventions at previous sessions of the Commission, including the working paper that was submitted on 9 April of last year. India joins the Non-Aligned Movement in reaffirming that achieving nuclear disarmament continues to be the highest priority of the international community, as underlined by the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in its landmark advisory opinion of 1996, pointed out that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. The United Nations Millennium Declaration underlined the need to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Successive Non-Aligned summits have underlined the importance of nuclear disarmament.

This year we mark the twentieth anniversary of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, which provided a holistic framework for seeking negotiations for a time-bound commitment for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons to usher in a world free of nuclear weapons rooted in non-violence. This action plan remains by far the most comprehensive initiative on nuclear disarmament. India has co-sponsored resolutions that have been adopted by significant majorities in the General Assembly on a convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons and on reducing nuclear danger. We have also co-sponsored a resolution adopted by consensus by the General Assembly on measures to prevent terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction.

The Disarmament Commission must send a strong signal of the international community's resolve to initiate concrete steps towards achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Member States should use this forum to intensify dialogue so as to build consensus that strengthens the ability of the international community to initiate concrete steps towards achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament based on the following elements: reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment of all nuclear-weapon States to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons, reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, taking into account the global reach and menace of nuclear weapons, adoption of measures by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear danger, including the risks of accidental nuclear war, and de-alerting of nuclear weapons to prevent the unintentional and accidental use of nuclear weapons.

Further elements would include the negotiation of a global agreement among nuclear-weapon States on no-first-use of nuclear weapons, the negotiation of a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified time frame.

We draw satisfaction from the fact that a large measure of common ground already exists with regard to issues discussed in Working Group II, on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. Deliberations at the Disarmament Commission between 2001 and 2003, although inconclusive, were also useful. India supports practical confidence-building measures initiatives — unilateral, bilateral, regional or global. We believe that such measures can promote a stable environment of peace and security among States by building trust and confidence and enhancing transparency to minimize misunderstandings. Guided by that principle, India has initiated several confidence-building measures with countries in our neighbourhood, including with China and Pakistan.

The implementation of appropriate types of confidence-building measures in specific regions should take into account the specific political, military and other conditions prevailing in the region. Such arrangements have to be freely agreed upon by the States of the region concerned while taking into account the specific conditions and characteristics of the region. A step-by-step approach should be adopted. A prescriptive approach that negates the sovereign

right of States to choose the confidence-building measures best suited to their interests should be avoided. We believe that focus on extraneous political issues will only erode the large measure of agreement that already exists in the Working Group and also dilute and weaken the practical confidence-building measures that we hope to adopt during this session.

Mr. Marschik (Austria): Let me also congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on your assumption of your duties. I assure you of my delegation's full support for your work.

Let me also say that Austria of course associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union (EU). I would like to make two additional points.

Austria has been, and continues to be, a long-standing supporter of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation in both the conventional and non-conventional realms. A whole generation has now lived under the threat of weapons that can cause mass annihilation. Is that threat something worth passing on to the next generation? We fully share the vision of a world free of weapons of mass destruction — a world free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. We need verifiable and irreversible disarmament of the nuclear arsenal, global adherence to the comprehensive nuclear-test ban and a comprehensive cut-off of weapons-grade fissile material.

More and more international politicians from nuclear-weapon States now believe, and have shared publicly their understanding, that nuclear weapons no longer serve as an effective legitimate deterrent but could become the ultimate source of global destruction. Austria welcomes those statements and hopes that those voices are heard.

For our part, we have tried to contribute as best we can during the past decade. Last year, Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik proposed some new ideas for the long-standing debate on the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle. In our view, the dangers associated with the increasing access to nuclear technology cannot be ignored for the sake of short-sighted focus on national economic interests, fears of limitation of State sovereignty or loss of control over a key technology sector. The time has come for new thinking in the light of new dramatic challenges.

As the Commission is aware, Austria believes that, because of the security and environmental risks, nuclear technology is no clean and safe energy source. Already in 1999, the Austrian Parliament passed a constitutional law banning the production of nuclear energy on its territory. We firmly believe in the need to develop alternative sustainable and safe forms of clean energy. We acknowledge, however, that other States will resort to nuclear energy to partially cover their energy needs and that, in view of vastly expanding needs, the use of nuclear energy, like the use of other energy sources, will rise in the coming years. More use of nuclear energy means more risk of misuse of that technology. It is time to design a framework suited to the nuclear realities of the twenty-first century and to restrict enrichment and reprocessing exclusively to facilities under multilateral control. Those limitations would need to be accompanied by rules of transparency and by an assurance that legitimate users could get supplies.

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in the idea of establishing such a new framework. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and several States have proposed a variety of interesting approaches, some focusing on the establishment of facilities under international control and others on guarantee mechanisms to assure the supply of nuclear fuel. We believe an initial step could be to entrust the IAEA to serve as a virtual broker for all transactions in the civilian nuclear fuel cycle. Every buyer — even one that is next door to the seller — must buy fuel through the IAEA. That would provide immediate shared transparency about who buys what. That should contribute to building trust and confidence. Gradually, transparency would be supplemented with IAEA control rights over sensitive technology, enrichment and reprocessing. In the long term, increasing those control rights should transform all enrichment and reprocessing facilities from national to essentially multilateral operations under the auspices of the IAEA. It goes without saying that any new facilities would, right from the beginning, be multilateral IAEA-controlled operations.

The concern has been raised as regards our idea that, by ceding control, the companies operating facilities would be de facto nationalized and the huge investments made in the technology would be lost. That is not true. The companies would continue to run the facilities and they would continue to reap the

profits. The IAEA would simply take on the tasks, currently discharged by States or regional organizations, of monitoring operations and ensuring that buyers fulfil non-proliferation requirements. But through the IAEA we would be doing the monitoring and verification together.

There might be concern that multilateralization could undermine developing countries' access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — which is, after all, a right enshrined in article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); but that concern is also not warranted. All States would fully maintain their NPT rights; but having a right would also give the owner the possibility to decide to use it exclusively together with other States or through an international organization. By entrusting the IAEA to control and monitor facilities, we are in fact making joint use of our right and benefiting from the peaceful uses of nuclear technology together in a fair and equal manner.

It is important to understand that the Austrian proposal precisely tries to counter the oft-derided division into haves and have-nots vis-à-vis nuclear technology. The confidence crisis about the use of civilian nuclear technology can only be overcome by establishing an international system that is fair and treats all States equally. That goal can be achieved by an arrangement whereby all States agree not to operate enrichment and reprocessing facilities individually and to transform all existing facilities into multilateral ones under the supervision of the IAEA.

Considerable advantages — in safety, security, non-proliferation and cost — could accrue. A joint facility places all participants under a greater degree of scrutiny. A breakout by the host would be more difficult than in the case of a nationally controlled entity. Most of all, new facilities would only have to be built for economic reasons, not for reasons of strategic politics or national pride. As a consequence, there would be fewer facilities — just as many as the market requires. Having fewer sites to watch means, in turn, that the IAEA is in a position to monitor more carefully, given that it has limited resources.

Austria is well aware that that is an ambitious proposal, but if we are truly at the beginning of a renaissance of nuclear energy, as many experts tell us, we have to act now. Let us not forget that, as ambitious as the proposal may seem, it is not new. It has, on a regional level, been done before. We would in fact be reinvesting in the successful ideas that lie at the root of European integration. Over 50 years ago, the founding members of today's European Union placed potentially dangerous substances and technologies — coal, steel and nuclear technology — under the control of joint multilateral institutions. It seems appropriate to take up those ideas now and to promote the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle.

It must be stressed, of course, that those multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle remain complementary to the primary non-proliferation instruments — effective and universal implementation of IAEA safeguards, including the Additional Protocol, and effective export controls — as well as to vital disarmament and non-proliferation instruments like the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the fissile material cut-off treaty.

I should now like to say a word about the CTBT. The entry into force of the Treaty is long overdue. Last year, Austria, together with Costa Rica, assumed the presidency of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of CTBT. In that capacity, we continue to raise awareness about the Treaty and the scientific civil applications of its international monitoring system, such as the tsunami early warning system. We hope that a better understanding of the overall benefits of the CTBT will help to speed up national ratification processes and the Treaty's entry into force. To that end, Austria has sponsored several CTBT workshops, such as for the Caribbean States and the Pacific States. Recent positive developments such as the ratifications by Barbados, Colombia and Malaysia indicate that there is currently a positive dynamic. We call on all States that have not done so yet to sign and ratify the CTBT.

The threat posed by weapons of mass destruction rises exponentially with the development of advanced delivery systems. Until we are successful in establishing a multilateral missile control regime within the United Nations, the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation of 2002 serves as the only normative international instrument for verification against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. Austria serves as the Executive Secretariat of the Code, and we have hosted six meetings of subscribing States. More than two thirds of Member States have subscribed to the Code, as called for, inter alia, in General Assembly resolution 60/62. I hope that more will join. It is paramount, however, that participating States demonstrate their commitment and

contribute positively to all aspects of this confidence-building instrument. I especially call on the United States and Russia to demonstrate leadership in this regard.

Let me now turn briefly to conventional weapons. Austria, together with other countries, is striving to conclude, by the end of this year, a legally binding instrument to prohibit cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. A ban on cluster munitions furthers the cause of disarmament, strengthens humanitarian principles and will contribute substantially to saving the lives, limbs and livelihoods of many civilians.

To raise awareness about the grave problems regarding cluster munitions, Austria organized the Vienna Conference on Cluster Munitions in December 2007, in which 138 States participated. The Conference — together with other such meetings in Oslo, Lima, Belgrade, Costa Rica, Wellington and Livingstone, and the conferences planned in the next weeks in Mexico City and Bangkok — served as preparation for a diplomatic conference in Dublin that will start on 19 May. We encourage all countries to actively participate at that conference to achieve a robust convention on cluster munitions, which will make a real difference in preventing future harm to civilians.

But as regards cluster munitions, it is not only Austrian diplomats who have been busy. Late last year, the Austrian parliament adopted a national law that foresees a comprehensive ban on cluster munitions. It prohibits the development, production, supply, sale, procurement, import, export, transit, use and possession of cluster munitions and provides for the destruction of national stockpiles by January 2011. The Austrian law contains no exceptions for so-called smart cluster bombs or exceptions for weapons with a low number of sub-munitions. When all stocks have been destroyed in three years, Austria will in fact be free of cluster munitions. That is disarmament in concrete terms, which we believe is best suited to building confidence among States.

The Austrian engagement to ban cluster munitions has its roots in another area at the intersection of disarmament and humanitarian policies, namely, the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. Since its adoption, Austria has fully supported the Mine Ban Treaty. It served as President of the first Review Conference of the Convention in 2004, and in 2007 we acted as co-chair of the Treaty's committee for victim assistance. Austria continues to support the mine-ban process to achieve universal adherence, improve international cooperation, improve assistance for victims, support the clearance of mine-affected areas and assist States in their efforts to eliminate land mines.

Let me conclude with an issue that must not go unmentioned in the context of this debate. Both together with our EU partners and individually, Austria strives to constructively support the fight against the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The availability of and easy access to small arms have terrible consequences — crime, terrorism, destabilization of State structures and societies and national and international conflict. As a result, we also encounter human rights violations and long-term displacement and poverty. Small arms contribute to undermining the attempts of millions of people to enjoy development opportunities in peace and security.

What have we done? Austria directly supports the destruction of stockpiles of small arms and light weapons and ammunition in several countries. In Africa, the continent most heavily affected by the uncontrolled spread of small arms, we support the strengthening of national legal regimes, capacity-building and practical disarmament measures through financing or supporting several individual projects. Those projects are implemented by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and are designed to benefit the Member States directly concerned. Those are long-term projects to which Austria will remain committed for many years to come.

Over the past years, we have often resorted to pointing at others and giving good advice about what others should do. That will lead us nowhere. We will have to make individual efforts so that we can all be successful together. I have tried to outline what Austria — a small, neutral country — is doing. Of course, we will try to do more. I hope that this year's session of the Disarmament Commission will be in a constructive effort by all of us for real disarmament. I hope we have a productive session.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for this year. I wish you every success in your difficult task, which you are quite capable of discharging. Through you, I should also like to

congratulate the other members of the Bureau. I assure you of the Sudan's full support in producing a final text at this session.

We are meeting today in the Disarmament Commission to deliberate on the priorities of disarmament and to discuss ways of effectively implementing the relevant conventions and protocols.

The Commission and other relevant disarmament machinery have experienced a series of failures. That is certainly not due to a lack of legal instruments, for there are sufficient international conventions addressing all aspects of disarmament. Those failures are due to the lack of implementation stemming from the absence of political will: nuclear States with sophisticated arsenals are not prepared to dismantle them or to place them under the full-scope safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That leads to an imbalance of power in the world and the ongoing race to carry out nuclear tests and to produce a new generation of weapons of mass destruction, on the pretext of pre-emptive deterrence and strengthening national security.

Moreover, the majority of States Members of the Organization continue to emphasize the need to operationalize multilateral disarmament channels and to implement conventions without selectivity and discrimination. That would lead to a safer world in which human endeavours are grounded in development and reconstruction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, rather than on a competition for arsenals of death and destruction.

Also of concern are the numerous conflicts, wars and hotbeds of tension throughout the world, entailing rising expenditures to strengthen State military power. In that connection, we would like to reiterate that nuclear-weapon States should take urgent and serious steps to reduce expenditures on weapons programmes in preparation for a phased dismantling of their nuclear arsenals. We also support efforts to conclude binding international agreements that would offer non-nuclear-weapon States guarantees that they would not be threatened by nuclear-weapon States, without any selectivity or discrimination and without prejudice to the right of all States to benefit from the peaceful and scientific use of nuclear technology in the interests of humankind.

The delegation of the Sudan would also like to reiterate the need to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world. That is one of the foundations of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and is a prerequisite for the success of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Thanks to regional and unilateral initiatives, some progress has been made in that regard. Treaties on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones cover almost half of the world. In that connection, I would in particular like to refer to the pioneering Pelindaba, Rarotonga, Tlatelolco and Bangkok Treaties and the Mongolia initiative.

However, it is regrettable that a single nuclear-weapon State has been a stumbling block to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That country is Israel, which is the only country in the region that refuses to accede to the NPT. At a time when we are beginning the preparatory work for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, in order to avoid a repetition of the 2005 Review Conference, we would like to emphasize the need for genuine resolve to implement previously adopted resolutions, in particular the one on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review Conference.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons currently poses a direct threat to most developing countries represented in the Organization. The true danger of those weapons lies in their easy use and access by non-State actors. That includes the possibility that they may fall into the hands of terrorists, especially given that restrictions are imposed only on receiving countries. Members are all aware of the role that such weapons play in igniting conflicts and civil wars.

As the Commission is aware, the Sudan has been an active participant in all regional and international forums to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The next biennial Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons will be held in July, and we emphasize the need for the implementation of part II of the Programme and for offering affected countries necessary technical assistance, especially in the fields of monitoring, tracking and stockpiling, and in terms of confidence-building measures and cooperation with regional offices in various countries.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Sudan looks forward to the success of the Commission's deliberations at this session. To that end, we will participate in Working Group II with a view to achieving the desired results from the United Nations disarmament machinery.

Mr. Al-Hayen (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure, in the name of the State of Kuwait, to convey to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session. We are confident that your well-known experience and wisdom will contribute to the success of our work this year. I should like also to assure you of my delegation's readiness to cooperate with you in order to contribute to the success of the tasks before you. I would similarly like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as the statement made by the representative of Syria on behalf of the Arab Group.

The State of Kuwait believes in the central role of the United Nations in addressing the main challenges facing the international community, foremost among which is ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The way to address that and other relevant issues has been specified clearly in numerous previously agreed conventions, agreements, resolutions and work programmes. What is now required from members is their commitment to their obligations and their cooperation and coordination in implementing the requirements through the existing mechanisms or to work for the improvement of those mechanisms to achieve greater effectiveness in the implementation process.

While the international community recognizes the threat that nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction pose to international peace and security, the progress needed to eliminate those dangers has not been achieved because of a lack of political will on the part of some to comply with the relevant international agreements and conventions. That confirms the importance of pursuing our efforts and endeavours and of taking the confidence-building measures necessary to achieve the desired goal of a world free of those destructive weapons, and one where peace and security prevail.

Believing in the importance of nuclear safety, my delegation urges all States that have yet to conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to do so. We also encourage States that have done so, but have not yet signed the Additional Protocol, to do so as well. We hope that all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will comply with their obligations under its provisions and their safeguards agreement, and will work closely with the IAEA to resolve any doubts and questions concerning their nuclear programmes through negotiation and constructive dialogue.

In that context, we demand that Israel — the only country in the Middle East that is not party to the non-proliferation Treaty and that possesses nuclear weapons, in defiance of the decisions of international law and repeated international calls to accede immediately to the Treaty — dismantle its nuclear arsenal and subject all its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime. Israel's situation is a clear disruption of the balance of power and is of ongoing concern in the Middle East.

The State of Kuwait calls on the international community to halt sales of scientific and technological means that contribute to further strengthening Israel's nuclear arms capabilities, or to any other country seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction programmes. In that respect, we also wish to confirm the right of all States of the region to acquire the technology and know-how necessary for the peaceful use of nuclear energy within the scope of the relevant international conventions.

The State of Kuwait also wishes to praise the Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in July 1997 concerning the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to resolve conflicts. We support effective international arrangements that would guarantee non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The State of Kuwait asserts that the time has come for important high-level political decisions to be taken to implement the internationally agreed arrangements to free our world of weapons of mass destruction. On that basis, we renew our call to the nuclear-weapon States to take the necessary measures

to eliminate them, since nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament go hand in hand and one cannot be achieved without the other.

The State of Kuwait wishes to confirm its total commitment to the demands of the international community relating to non-proliferation and disarmament. As the regrettable series of failures in disarmament continues, we see that it is of crucial importance that the provisions of the NPT be implemented in a comprehensive and non-selective manner, particularly article VI on nuclear disarmament and article IV on facilitating peaceful applications of nuclear technology. We also stress the need to adhere to the principles contained in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the results of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT, and the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, particularly the 13 practical steps contained in the document.

The State of Kuwait confirms its support for the text of the final communiqué of the fourth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which calls upon Member States that have not ratified the Treaty — and especially those whose ratification is required for its entry into force — to do so.

The State of Kuwait has submitted its national report to the General Assembly, in which it has set forth the measures taken to guarantee its compliance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which seeks to prevent weapons of mass destruction and materials used in manufacturing them from falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

With respect to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the State of Kuwait welcomed the General Assembly's adoption in December 2005 of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Although the United Nations Conference to review progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons did not achieve the desired objective, it succeeded in shedding light on one important issue.

Finally, we hope that the consultations will be transparent and comprehensive and will fulfil our aspirations to international peace and security.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, most warmly on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2008 session. This year's session, under your chairmanship, is extremely important because we must conclude the discussions of the current three-year cycle and reach consensus on recommendations on substantive matters. I can assure you of the full support of Japan in your endeavours. Furthermore, we would like to commend the immense efforts made by the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

The Disarmament Commission can look back at an impressive record of achievements. In 1992, the Commission issued guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters. In 1993, it reached agreement on guidelines for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security, and then, in 1996, for international arms transfers. Moreover, in 1999, consensus was achieved on two sets of guidelines concerning the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and conventional arms control.

In recent years, however, we have seen little outcome from the Disarmament Commission. In 2003, we were unable to reach agreement in the fields of both nuclear disarmament and conventional weapons. We must make the necessary efforts to break through the current situation. With each country demonstrating utmost flexibility, we strongly hope that the Commission will be able to successfully adopt recommendations.

As the only country that has suffered the devastation of atomic bombs, Japan seeks a peaceful world free from nuclear weapons to create a better international security environment. To that end, it is vital for the whole world to share a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons by overcoming the differences in position of the nuclear-weapon and the non-nuclear-weapon States. With such a vision, our annual General Assembly resolution, entitled "Renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons", has been consistently adopted by an overwhelming majority. The resolution demonstrates Japan's strong belief that we should build upon practical and concrete measures for nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Taking that into account, Japan

appreciates that there has recently been a surge in debate on practical measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

For step-by-step progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, maintaining and strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime is of critical importance. However, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the regime, is facing a grave challenge, among others, from the danger of NPT non-nuclear-weapon States' covertly developing nuclear weapons under the cover of the right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

In that context, I must highlight the importance of the international community collectively tackling the challenges facing the NPT regime. At the same time, I must also highlight the importance of ensuring the complete universality of the NPT. For the success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, Japan greatly hopes that further meaningful and substantive discussions will be conducted at the second session of the Preparatory Committee. Those discussions should be based on the outcome of the first session of the Preparatory Committee, chaired by Ambassador Amano of Japan.

For the purpose of enhancing the credibility of the NPT, it is also important for all the nuclear-weapon States to faithfully implement their article VI nuclear disarmament obligations. In that connection, while welcoming the nuclear disarmament efforts of the United States and the Russian Federation, including the significant reduction in the United States nuclear weapons stockpile, Japan hopes for an early agreement on a successor framework for the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. We also welcome the recent unilateral nuclear disarmament measures announced by the United Kingdom and France. Japan seeks greater transparency from all the nuclear-weapon States on nuclear disarmament efforts, and in that regard we appreciate the detailed presentations given by some nuclear-weapon States. Additionally, we call on all nuclear-weapon States to make further irreversible and verifiable reductions.

The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is also imperative. It was heartening, therefore, that with the recent ratification of Colombia, the number of annex II States that have yet to ratify has now fallen into the single digits. Japan will continue to call for the ratification of the CTBT by all States and expects that the moratorium on nuclear test explosions will be maintained pending the Treaty's entry into force.

The Conference on Disarmament is the international community's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Nonetheless, the Conference has been deadlocked for over a decade. That is an extremely regrettable situation. In recent years, the Conference has conducted important substantive discussions, in particular on the four core issues, and a proposal tabled by the six presidents of 2008 is now under consideration. Japan calls on all the Conference on Disarmament members to reach agreement on a programme of work and commence negotiations on a disarmament treaty.

Now let me turn our attention to each of the Conference's four core issues. First, concerning nuclear disarmament, I would like to emphasize the necessity for all the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their strong commitment to article VI on nuclear disarmament.

In relation to the important nuclear disarmament measure of a fissile material cut-off treaty, which will set a quantitative cap on nuclear weapons, it became even more apparent in the Conference on Disarmament's deliberations of 2006 and 2007 that conditions were sufficiently ripe for a commencement of negotiations. Japan strongly appeals to all member States to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty without delay. Furthermore, we urge all the nuclear-weapon States and non-NPT States parties to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices pending the entry into force of a treaty.

In relation to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, Japan is ready to examine and discuss all the various issues surrounding the issue, including the draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. Additionally, Japan in principle supports the idea of negative security assurances and will actively contribute to further discussions.

As one approach among the many and diverse views necessary for tackling conventional weapons,

which actually cause the most destruction on a day-to-day basis, I must mention the necessity of building confidence among States. From that perspective, Japan is extremely pleased that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which is based on the 1991 General Assembly resolution on transparency in armaments, has become established as one of the most important international systems for promoting confidence-building among States. More than 15 years after the establishment of that system, I still cannot emphasize strongly enough the danger of expansion in armaments through distrust among States, as well as the importance of preventing that danger.

Japan believes that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is the most important international framework for tackling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and that confidence-building among States contributes to the eradication of the illicit trade. At the 2006 meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, a voluntary registration form for small arms and light weapons was created, and it is expected that efforts related to the Arms Register and the Programme of Action will have a synergistic effect in the future.

Furthermore, taking into consideration that 500,000 people fall victim to small arms every year, the implementation of the Programme of Action must be strengthened continually. From that perspective, in March last year Japan held the Tokyo Workshop on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in which participants shared best practices related to efforts on small arms and light weapons and discussed transfer controls, among other issues. Additionally, Japan, in cooperation with Colombia and South Africa, submits annually a resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", and promotes the strengthening of efforts on small arms in United Nations forums. Japan will be actively working towards the success of the Biennial Meeting of States, which will be held this July based on last year's resolution.

An arms trade treaty is intimately related to building confidence in the field of conventional weapons, since it aims to guarantee the responsible transfer of arms and will create a common standard for such transfers. This year, meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on an arms trade treaty have been held. Japan is participating in its deliberations and making proactive contributions to enable meaningful discussion. As a matter of principle, Japan does not export weapons and has maintained that policy for more than 60 years. We sincerely hope for a more peaceful world, and it is in that spirit that we intend to vigorously contribute to the discussions on an arms trade treaty.

This year, Japan holds the presidency of the G-8 and will be hosting the G-8 summit meeting in Toyako, Hokkaido, in July. The G-8 Hokkaido Toyako summit will raise as one of its main themes the issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Japan envisions a strong G-8 message towards strengthening the international non-proliferation regime.

Additionally, Japan will be hosting the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development this year. As peace is a basic prerequisite for development, Japan has consistently focused on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of countries.

Strengthening our efforts on disarmament is critical for peace consolidation. Moreover, as the Secretary-General has pointed out, by freeing up resources that would have been diverted to armaments, those resources can then be used for economic development, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Japan is energetically cooperating for the maintenance, rehabilitation and building of global peace and aims to be a peace-fostering nation.

The Chairman: We have heard the last speaker in the general exchange of views for this morning. The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply, and I give him the floor.

Mr. Semin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation has decided to exercise its right of reply with respect to the statement made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, its references to the situation with regard to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). Unfortunately, I do not have a written version of the statement made by the representative of Slovenia, but as far as I remember, that representative said that the Russian Federation, despite what had been said at the previous session of the Disarmament

Commission, had taken a step that was not in line with what it had stated with respect to this Treaty. We would like to give an explanation.

In the context of the current situation with respect to the CFE Treaty, the suspension of fulfilment of the Russian Federation's obligations under the Treaty was a logically justified step. We gave notice of our intention to take this step, including at the previous session of the Disarmament Commission. The CFE Treaty, in its current form, is outmoded and no longer valid. It runs counter to the security interests of the Russian Federation, a fact about which we have long informed our partners.

But with the suspension of our participation in the CFE Treaty, we are not closing the door on further negotiations. We expect that our Treaty partners will show readiness to restore the viability of the regime for controlling conventional forces in Europe on the basis of the adapted CFE Treaty. The Russian Federation made concrete proposals on that subject at the Extraordinary Conference of States Parties to the CFE Treaty in 2007. They remain relevant and are still on the table for negotiation.

To achieve this goal, we are taking targeted steps. Specifically, we are aiming at regular negotiations with our Treaty partners, in particular the United States of America. We are already looking at various possibilities for bringing participants in the process closer together.

On many issues, however, there is still considerable work to be done. Unfortunately, our Western partners frequently, having taken a step forward, for some reason take two steps backwards. On the whole, we have the impression that they are the ones expecting specific decisions from us now, particularly on reversing our decision to suspend our participation in the Treaty, before our partners would be prepared to discuss our concerns — and only after the entry into force of the adapted CFE Treaty and without any guarantees in terms of results. It is unlikely that such an approach would be acceptable and in line with the concept of parallel actions.

The Russian Federation is in favour of rapidly resolving the problem regarding the Treaty, but what is important to us is the quality of the agreement. Only after resolving all the problems that we have pointed out will we be able to breathe new life into the Treaty regime. I would like to add that professional and detailed discussion on the Treaty is continuing in specific forums, and we wonder whether the Disarmament Commission could do anything; it is probably not useful to talk about this here.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.